STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

MEXICAN WAR: PERSPECTIVES ON FORCE PROJECTION, THEN AND NOW

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2000

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Mexican War: Perspectives on Force Projection, Then and Now

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 10 April 2000 PAGES: 30 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The National Military Strategy of the United States is built upon the crucial element of power projection and the military's ability to plan and execute force projection operations to defend and protect U.S. national interests. Is force projection doctrine new or is its lineage vested in America's first foreign war, the Mexican War, 1846-1848? Paralleling today's Army doctrine, does the historical perspective of the Mexican War validate the force projection process, and are there enduring fundamentals that should guide military strategy in the future? The answers to these questions will be derived by an examination of the Mexico City campaign. This was the decisive campaign of the Mexican War that took the United States Army into Mexico's heartland. The outcome of this campaign, and ultimately the war, was embedded in America's ability to project and sustain its combat forces in a foreign land. This was a mammoth task, a task that could only be accomplished through decisive leadership and the struggles and hardships that soldiers, sailors, and marines endured.

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> March 9 [1847]—the precise day when I had been thirty years a general officer—the sun dawned propitiously on the expedition. There was but little surf on the beach—a necessary condition—as we had to effect a landing from the open sea. Every detail, providing for all contingencies, had been discussed and arranged with my staff, and published in orders. The whole fleet of transports—some eighty vessels, in the presence of many foreign ships of war, stood up the coast, flanked by two naval steamers and five gun boats to cover the movement. Passing through them . . . the shouts and cheers from every deck gave me assurance of victory, whatever might be the force prepared to receive us.
>
> — Lieutenant General Winfield Scott,
> General in Chief of the United States Army

> Equally essential to the shaping and responding elements of the strategy is being able to rapidly move and concentrate U.S. military power in distant corners of the globe. Effective and efficient global power projection is the key to the flexibility demanded of our forces . . . If necessary, it allows us to fight our way into a denied theater or to create and protect forward operating bases. . . . Control of the seas and airspace support both the shaping and responding elements of our strategy, allowing the United States to project military power across great distances and protect our interests around the world.
>
> — William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense

The National Military Strategy of the United States of America relies upon the strategic concept of power projection. Power projection is executed through force projection. Is force projection doctrine new or is its lineage vested in America's first foreign war, the Mexican War, 1846-1848? Using today's current Army doctrine, this research paper will examine the decisive campaign of the Mexican War and will derive perspectives on force projection, then and now.

Power projection is the ability to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain U.S. military power in multiple, dispersed locations until conflict resolution. It provides the flexibility to respond with forces that can be adapted to the environment in which they must operate. These forces must also be able to fight their way into a nonpermissive, threatening environment.[1] The enabler of power projection is force projection. "Force projection is the demonstrated ability to rapidly alert, mobilize, deploy, and operate anywhere in the world. Force projection applies to the entire Army, active and reserve components, based in or outside the Continental United States (OCONUS), and supported by civilians."[2] The significance of force projection has increased over recent years and continues to intensify as a national priority. This is in response to changes in National Military Strategy, brought about by the falling of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the USSR, and the end of the Cold War. Changes in strategy reduced the presence of forward deployed forces around the world resulting in a greater reliance on CONUS based

forces. Since the world is still a dangerous place, the ability to get these CONUS forces, as well as limited OCONUS forces, to potential world trouble spots is vital to the security of the United States and to the stability of the world. The reliance on force projection is well documented over the past ten years, to include operations in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm exemplify force projection and its significance to our national interests.

> During the 1991 Persian Gulf conflict, the military was once again called upon to respond to crises. In the early hours of 2 August 1990, an Iraqi force of more than 100,000 soldiers, spearheaded by three armored divisions, invaded Kuwait. On 7 August, the NCA directed the deployment of U.S. forces in response to Saudi Arabia's request for assistance. USCENTCOM responded rapidly, placing the first U.S. soldier on the ground within 31 hours of the initial alert order . . . the tailoring of a proper force mix for this operation required the mobilization of 140,000 Army guardsmen and reservists—the largest mobilization since World War II. During this force projection operation, the Army, supported by other services, deployed a force equivalent in size to eight divisions and their supporting forces—some 300,000 soldiers and 60 days of supplies—from the United States and Europe, all within a period of six months . . . even if this post-conflict activity continued, units no longer needed for the campaign began to redeploy to home stations and to reconstitute in preparation for future operations. Reserve component individuals and units no longer needed on active duty demobilized. The Persian Gulf campaign—a force projection operation—thus went full cycle.[3]

Since 1990 the Army has increased major operations by 300 percent, and on a typical day there are 140,000 soldiers deployed in seventy countries. These missions are planned and executed around the key element of force projection. Force projection gets the Army to its place of business. In today's unpredictable world of multiple, potentially simultaneous threats, U.S. force projection capabilities are relevant and necessary.

Strategies and doctrine may change, but the necessity of force projection is not new. Although not recognized as a strategic concept or enabler in 1846, force projection capability was embedded in the United States' ability to wage war with Mexico. Historically, the Mexican War was unique in the United States' development as a global power. It was America's first foreign war. Historians do not count the War of 1812, since it was considered a second war for independence against the motherland. The Mexican War was fought almost entirely in a strange and distant land.[4] This historical event in United States history, from 1846-1848, establishes a historical relationship between the use of military power to protect national interests and achieve national objectives through force projection. "The United States was an invader of a foreign land. A long march by land or a voyage by sea, transported the combatants to the scene of action."[5]

FORCE PROJECTION

Field Manual 100-5, Operations, provides the benchmark for U.S. Army doctrine and is the authoritative guide on how Army forces fight wars and conduct operations other than war. "This keystone

manual links Army roles and missions to the National Military Strategy of which power projection is a fundamental principle. Thus, force projection—the military's ability to respond quickly and decisively to global requirements—is fundamental to Army operations doctrine."[6]

Planning and executing force projection operations is a challenging and complex process. Army doctrine has identified a sequence of potential operational stages for the effective flow of a force projection mission. This criteria will be used in this analysis to frame the historical force projection perspectives of the Mexican War.

There are eight sequential stages of force projection. These stages can overlap in time and space. The process ends when the mission is complete and the last soldier returns home. The stages are mobilization, predeployment activity, deployment, entry operations, operations, war termination and post conflict operations, redeployment and reconstitution, and demobilization.[7]

DECLARATION OF WAR

On 11 May 1846 President James Polk, the 11th President of the United States, went to Congress to petition for war. President Polk said: "The grievous wrongs perpetrated by Mexico upon our citizens for a long period of years remain unredressed; and solemn treaties have been disregarded . . . In the meantime we have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted, even before Mexico passed the boundary of the United States, invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon American soil."[8] His message further rehashed the well-known story of long-standing complaints against Mexico and the failure of diplomatic efforts to resolve differences. The President stressed a threat of a Mexican invasion of Texas and the failure of every effort at reconciliation between the two countries. In addition, the build-up of both U.S. and Mexican forces along the disputed area along the Rio Grande River resulted in a skirmish. This gave President Polk a powerful battle cry that U.S. blood had been shed on U.S. soil.[9]

There was much debate and political maneuvering in both the House and Senate. Finally, two days later the administration won the support of Congress, and President Polk signed the Declaration of War on 13 May 1846. The Act provided for the prosecution of war between the United States and the Republic of Mexico, authorizing 50,000 volunteers to serve for either one year or the duration of the war. The law also provided that any warships under construction would be completed or others acquired as necessary. The legislation allocated $10 million to pay for these war measures.[10]

WAR OBJECTIVES

What did the U.S. want to achieve from this war? Specific U.S. objectives were the recognition of the Rio Grande River as the border between the U.S. and Mexico, the guaranteed security of Texas, and the concession of the territories of New Mexico and California.[11] Today, this area covers parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Utah, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. During the 1840's, in the U.S., there

was a popular belief in Manifest Destiny. This was a common perception that supported the inevitable territorial expansion of the country. The overarching idea maintained that the U.S. should control all of North America because of U.S. economic and political superiority, rapid population growth, and God's will. The Mexican War was a likely extension of Manifest Destiny. Right or wrong, this put soldiers on the road to war.

STATUS OF FORCES

Upon the declaration of war, the U.S. Regular Army had only 637 officers and 5,925 enlisted men. This small force was organized into eight infantry regiments, four artillery regiments, and two dragoon regiments. The Army was normally deployed throughout the country in small detachments and isolated companies. In addition to fighting Indians, the Army sometimes protected them from the encroaching white settlers. Company grade officers gained experience with small unit tactics but did not train for fighting in large formations with other units. Officer leadership was good. Senior officers were mostly self-taught in the art of war, and they had a wealth of experience dating back to the War of 1812 and the Seminole Wars. Junior officers were well-educated and trained in the art of war at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In addition, the U.S. Navy had 72 ships and one Marine Corps battalion. This force would soon grow by an additional 73,532 volunteers as the U.S. force projection process got underway.[12]

The strength of the regular Mexican army far outnumbered the U.S. Army. They had an estimated 35,000 soldiers. There were 12 regular line infantry and four regular light infantry regiments, nine cavalry regiments, three brigades of foot artillery and a brigade of mounted artillery. The soldiers were considered courageous, and many were veterans of skirmishes and battles that took place during frequent revolutions. But they were, for the most part, poorly trained conscripts equipped with inferior weapons. Leadership was a major problem. Senior leaders were former Spanish and foreign-born officers who were not trained in the art of war. Many generals were political and social appointees without significant skills to effectively employ their forces.[13] On the eve of the war in April 1846, a British diplomat described the Mexican Officer Corps as: ". . . the worst perhaps to be found in any part of the world . . . ignorant, incapable and insubordinate . . . and their personal courage, I fear, is of a very negative character."[14] In addition, the Mexican navy was almost nonexistent. It consisted of only a few brigs, small steamers, and gunboats, designed for coastal and harbor defense, instead of offensive operations at sea.[15] The weaknesses of the Mexican military quickly became apparent as hostilities began.

GEOSTRATEGIC FACTORS

As the United States prepared to go to war, there were many geostrategic factors that had to be considered. Some of these factors were known, and some were learned along the way. If not adequately integrated into planning, these factors would have had an adverse impact on force projection and the outcome of the war. "Mexico's tropical climate, its wild and barren topography and exotic vegetation and

wildlife, the unfamiliar ways of its people, the differences in language, customs, and heritage all gave the war a romantic appeal that had never before been experienced. For the first time, Americans were exposed to an alien land, to a culture not their own, and the effect was broadening, educational and even startling."[16] The projection of the U.S. Army into a foreign land was a new way of war for America. Great military leaders made the difference between success and failure.

Ground mobility was hampered by vast deserts, high mountains with narrow passes, and long distances between objectives. Overland movement was also slowed by the lack of drinking water and sickness. "Many times on the march the troops had to cover great distances with only the water in their canteens to quench their thirst. When they did find water it was often extremely contaminated, yet they drank it anyway."[17] The poor quality of water contributed to increased hardship since it made many soldiers sick.

Sea mobility along Mexican coastal waters was hampered by shallow draft harbors and unpredictable sandbars. U.S. shipping was also vulnerable to "northers," which were storms that frequented the Gulf of Mexico from October to April and struck without warning.[18] Navigation along the Rio Grande River was hazardous. It was properly termed "the muddiest, crookedest and swiftest river in North America." The channel was constantly shifting and the navigation obstructed by sandbars, made it difficult for the smallest steamboats to proceed.[19]

Disease was a significant threat to American soldiers. Yellow fever, contracted mostly in low-lying coastal areas, was the most feared illness. As a young regular Army Lieutenant, Ulysses S. Grant expressed the feelings of most American soldiers by writing, "We will all have to get out of this part of Mexico soon or we will be caught by the yellow fever which I am ten to one more afraid of than the Mexicans."[20] Other illnesses included malaria, dysentery, and diarrhea.

Long lines of communication back to supply depots in the United States would take time and considerable effort. Both land and sea routes could require extensive transportation assets and effective planning to anticipate requirements. Both troop movements and resupply shipments needed to be planned in advance to compensate for long distances and slow travel times.

All of the geostrategic factors required ingenuity, perseverance, technological advances, and strong leadership to overcome. It was not easy to develop a force projection Army.

INITIAL WAR STRATEGY

Once war was declared, the United States soon began operations for the seizure of the northern territory of Mexico. Initial strategy did not go beyond the hope that this loss of territory would compel Mexico to come to favorable terms quickly and put an end to the war.[21] President Polk adopted an unrealistic view of the war and expected to win peace without a major military effort.[22]

The general plan of the campaign was to make a series of invasions on the western, northern, and eastern fronts of Mexico. United States land forces were to penetrate Mexico with three divisions. One division, under the command of General Philip Kearny, proceeded from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, into

New Mexico and California. This was known as the Army of the West. The other two divisions would concentrate on areas south and southwest of the Rio Grande River. General John Wool commanded the second division which would support the main effort, and the third division was commanded by General Zachary Taylor. These two divisions were to overrun and occupy the Mexican provinces of Chihuahua, New Leon, and Tamalilipas.[23] The overall plan was to take possession of California, New Mexico, and land south to the Rio Grande River for the permanent annexation by the United States.

This was a joint campaign. The U.S. Army operations in both the west and across the Rio Grande River were supported by the U.S. Navy. Naval forces were split between two areas of operation. The American Home Squadron was assigned the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Squadron was assigned off the west coast of Mexico and California. Both squadrons had the missions to establish a tight coastal blockade of ports and harbors, to capture some ports, to transport troops and supplies, and to maintain free and protected navigation for U.S. shipping.[24]

Naval operations were very successful, and Mexico was virtually cut off from the outside world when it came to supplies of war materials and munitions. This was easily accomplished since the Mexican navy was too small to contest control of the sea lanes, and only a few privateers made any attempts at harassing American ships. Success of the U.S. Army was much slower and much more difficult. While ultimately successful in the outcome of each battle, U.S. casualties were mounting from hostile fire and disease. Despite compelling U.S. victories on both land and sea, it did not break Mexico's will to fight.

REVISED WAR STRATEGY

The initial wartime strategy was based on a belief that the application of graduated force and military pressure would break Mexico's will to fight. The United States did not understand mid-19th century Mexico and failed to recognize that the Mexicans would not countenance the loss of California, New Mexico, and areas north of the Rio Grande River, unless it was forced upon them by the destruction of their capacity to resist.[25] In late August 1846, three months after the onset of the war, President Polk and his advisors rethought their strategy. They concluded that new operations would have to be launched to force Mexico to sue for peace.[26]

Since the disastrous military losses by Mexico and the occupation of a large portion of her northernmost provinces failed to produce decisive results, the United States would now carry the war to the Mexican heartland. The ultimate objective would be the capture of the capital, Mexico City. However, the overland movement of General Taylor's forces from northern Mexico to take the capital was not an acceptable option. The vastness of the intervening desert and the tremendous distances involved required another solution. In early October 1846, President Polk approved an alternate plan primarily developed by General Winfield Scott, the General in Chief of the U.S. Army. This plan required General Taylor's forces to hold the territory it had already conquered, while a second force would land on the Mexican east coast and march inland. Point of entry into Mexico would be the Gulf Port of Vera Cruz,

located 250 miles east of Mexico City. U.S. forces would follow the same path of the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez and his Conquistadors in 1519.[27]

To assist the President's decision process, General Scott presented a masterful planning paper which he called "Vera Cruz and Its Castle." It clearly set forth the new strategy to achieve the decisive victory to end the war.[28] Vera Cruz was a significant objective.

> Vera Cruz has long been celebrated both for its commercial importance and its commanding position at the terminus, on the Gulf, of the great national road leading from the City of Mexico to the seacoast. . . . The location has always been an unhealthy one, as is the case with most of the towns situated in the . . . low ground bordering upon the Gulf. . . . the quality of the water is bad; the atmosphere poisoned by noxious exhalations from numerous ponds and marshes; and the air full of insects, the most annoying and conspicuous of which is the tancudo, a species of mosquito. . . . But the chief feature of the defenses of Vera Cruz is the famous Castle of San Juan de Ullua, the reduction of which was the great object of the expedition under General Scott.[29]

Vera Cruz presented many challenges to General Scott. In comparison with today's doctrine of applying force projection considerations, he skillfully applied all of them except media impact, combined operations, and post-conflict considerations. Combined operations never became a part of the war, however, media impact and post-conflict considerations were incorporated later. His plan successfully integrated lethality for the deploying force, anticipation, force tailoring and teamwork, intelligence, battle command, logistics, and training.

President Polk selected General Scott to lead the invasion force. He would draw most of his forces from General Taylor's army and a smaller force from the United States. The transfer of troops from General Taylor's command to make up the bulk of General Scott's new invasion force was not well received by Taylor. General Scott was sensitive to General Taylor's position, as reflected in his letter to General Taylor on 25 November 1846.

> I am not coming, my dear general, to supersede you in the immediate command on the line of operations rendered . . . by you and your gallant army. My proposed theatre is different. . . . But . . . I shall be obliged to take from you most of the gallant officers and men (regular and volunteers) whom you have so long and so nobly commanded. I am afraid that I shall, by imperious necessity—the approach of yellow fever on the Gulf Coast—reduce you, for a time, to stand on the defensive. This will be infinitely painful to you, and for that reason distressing to me. But I rely upon your patriotism to submit to the temporary sacrifice with cheerfulness.[30]

Despite General Taylor's protests, 9,000 soldiers were transferred to General Scott. This left Taylor with less than 1,000 regular soldiers and several regiments of newly-raised volunteers.[31]

FORCE PROJECTION AND THE MEXICO CITY CAMPAIGN

On 23 November 1848, General Scott left Washington, DC, with orders in hand from the Honorable M. L. Marcy, Secretary of War. The perimeters of the orders were broad and gave General Scott the necessary discretionary power to conduct the campaign as he assembled the invasion force. His plan materialized. The order read:

> The President, several days since, communicated in person to you his orders to repair to Mexico, to take the command of the forces there assembled, and particularly to organize and set on foot an expedition to operate on the Gulf Coast, if, on arriving at the theatre of action, you shall deem it to be practicable. It is not proposed to control your operations by definite and positive instructions, but you are left to prosecute them as your judgement, under a full view of all the circumstance, shall dictate. The work is before you, and the means provided, or to be provided, for accomplishing it, are committed to you, in the full confidence that you will use them to the best advantage. . . . It is hoped that you will have the requisite force to accomplish them. Of this you must be the judge, when preparations are made, and the time of action arrived.[32]

To accomplish this mission, General Scott would project a credible force through an amphibious landing to secure his objectives. "The invasion of Mexico through the Port of Vera Cruz was a vast undertaking, up to that time the most ambitious amphibious expedition in human history."[33] In order to accomplish this, effective Joint Army-Navy planning, coordination, and anticipation were required.

General Scott planned to transport a large force by sea to Vera Cruz, land on a hostile shore under the defense of the formidable Castle of San Juan de Ulloa, seize a major port, and then advance 250 miles through unknown countryside to capture the capital of Mexico.[34] Was this a force projection operation? By comparing the evolution and execution of this campaign with current Army doctrine, the answer to that question will be derived. As previously stated, current Army doctrine identifies eight stages of force projection.

MOBILIZATION

Mobilization is the first stage of force projection. It is the process in which the active military component capability is augmented by the reserve component as well as assembling and organizing personnel, supplies, and material.[35] President Polk planned for volunteers to play a major role in the war. He said, "Our reliance for protection and defense of the land must be mainly our citizen soldiers, who will be ready, as they ever have been ready in the times past, to rush with alacrity, at the call of their country, to her defense."[36] The war bill, passed by Congress on 13 May 1846, authorized 50,000 volunteers into service to augment the regular Army. Of this number, there was an immediate call-up for 20,000, and the remaining 30,000 volunteers were held in reserve.[37] The country's response to the call for Army volunteers was overwhelming. A study of soldier stories reveals two major themes for this overwhelming

response to fight the Mexicans. First, there was a desire for glory and adventure in a foreign land, sparked by patriotism. Second, there was a perceived need to avenge the deaths of men killed during the Texas revolution.[38]

The Navy did not fare as well as the Army. The Navy was authorized to increase its strength from 7,500 sailors to 10,000 sailors for the duration of the war. Problems recruiting seamen made it impossible to strengthen the force, and it never exceeded 8,000 men during the war.[39]

As part of the mobilization process, the Army had to train its new soldiers and equip them with weapons, ammunition, food, medical supplies, tents, and blankets. The least critical item, in terms of availability of supply, were guns. Two national arsenals at Springfield, Massachusetts, and Harper's Ferry, Virginia, turned out thousands of weapons. Training focused on marching, manual of arms, and marksmanship. Many soldiers already knew how to use firearms, especially those from rural areas.[40] The soldiers and units that were accessed, equipped, and trained through the mobilization process would directly benefit the development of General Scott's force.

PREDEPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES

Mobilization is followed by predeployment activities. These activities include continuous efforts to train and equip soldiers, the development of a tailored force, and establishment of command relationships. Anticipatory logistics planning is critical during this stage.[41]

This was an extremely critical period for the Mexico City campaign. The logistical preparation for the deployment was immense. Lack of transportation assets was the most critical problem. The need to plan for long lines of communication were required for both land and sea supply routes. Ships had to be built, purchased, or chartered in sufficient numbers to carry men, horses, and supplies to distant ports.[42] This included sea-going steamers, sailing vessels, and shallow-daft river steamboats. "The obstinacy of ship owners and the exorbitant prices they charged the government, the demand for ships to carry grain to Europe, even the rise in the price of cotton that diverted ships to European trade, all made the task . . . difficult and frustrating."[43] There was also a significant shortage of wagons for overland movements. Many new ones were built and many contracted for, but, like trucks today, there was never enough.

During this predeployment stage, General Scott continued refining and detailing the requirements for his force. Of particular importance was the procurement of surfboats, with flat bottoms, that would be used for the amphibious assault on Vera Cruz. The purpose of these boats were to transport troops and supplies to the beach while navigating through the shallow water of the shoreline.

> Designed by a naval officer, Lieutenant George M. Totten, and built in the vicinity of Philadelphia . . . they were the first specially built American amphibious craft . . . they were built in three sizes, so they could be stacked for transport: The largest was 40 feet and could carry 45 or more men . . . each one carried a crew of six oarsmen, one coxswain, and a skipper . . . contracts for the purchase of the surfboats stipulated a price of $795 per piece and completion within one month. Forty-seven sets, or 141 boats,

were ordered and were to be shipped to the Gulf in vessels with oversize hatches which allowed them to be stowed in the hold.[44]

These boats were critical to the success of the campaign as well as the coordination with the navy to provide all the necessary sealift, manning, and protection afloat.

Predeployment activities also included the force tailoring for the mission. General Scott task organized his force into three divisions. Two of these were regulars under Generals William Worth and David Twiggs, and the third division was made up of volunteers under General Robert Patterson.[45]

All of these activities focused on the final preparation to deploy. The plan committed troops, marines, and sailors from the Home Squadron to deploy and assemble on a small island in the Gulf of Mexico.

DEPLOYMENT

The deployment stage requires the effective use of limited transportation assets to lift personnel, equipment, and supplies to the theater of operations. The use of these assets are crucial to the success of force projection. In deployment, versatility and agility in force mix, combat capability, sustainment, and lift must be maintained.[46]

Sealift was the mode of lift for deployment of forces into the Gulf. In January 1847, force deployments commenced from both Mexico and the United States. Troops from General Tyler embarked from Tampico, Mexico, and new troops, supplies, and the surfboats embarked from ports in the United States—53 vessels departed from Atlantic ports, and 163 vessels from Gulf ports.[47] All of the deploying forces were to rendezvous at the Island of Lobos. This island is located 130 miles north of Vera Cruz and is barely two miles in circumference. During February 1847, the various detachments of troops arrived to complete the preparation for making the descent upon the mainland.[48] The island was selected as a staging base for the expedition because its protected harbor was large enough to accommodate the assembled fleet.

General Scott arrived on Lobos Island on 21 February 1847. In the week following his arrival, time was spent reorganizing the force of nearly 10,000 men, working out a detailed plan of debarkation and making last-minute adjustments and preparations.[49]

Although ultimately successful, the deployment to the staging island had many problems and delays. These delays hampered General Scott's desire to move through Vera Cruz and the coastal lowlands before the onset of the yellow fever season. Logistical difficulties caused almost a one month delay. These difficulties were similar to those experienced in present day operations. Bad weather, contracting problems, mechanical failure, shortage of crews, shortage of vessels, and materiel not ready for loading were all problems encountered during the deployment of General Scott's army.[50]

Deployment by ship in 1847 was a hard journey. Soldiers were crammed into holds of the ships like cattle going to market. Some ships had rough pine bunks that slept four men to a bunk. The most often mentioned problems aboard ship were bad food, overcrowding, and seasickness. Storms at sea only made a bad situation worse. A volunteer from Mississippi described a storm in the Gulf of Mexico this way: "It was a dreadful sight, the mules and hoses got loose and ran into the cabin. At the same time chairs and trunks were dashed to pieces—the mules and horses (moaning) and falling about, the blood spouting, the well (men) rushing out of the cabin, and the sick crawling . . . and retreating to their berths. This was a dreadful sight."[51]

Despite the hardships and delays, the expeditionary force completed deployment, assembled, trained, and prepared to conduct the decisive campaign that would win the war. On 2 March 1847, the fleet sailed from Lobos Island toward their final rendezvous point, twelve miles south of Vera Cruz. The next force projection stage of entry operations was about to begin.

ENTRY OPERATIONS

Entry operations may be unopposed or opposed. Specific details concerning various aspects of landing on a hostile or potentially hostile shore can be found in Joint Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations. General Scott expected and planned for an opposed entry into Vera Cruz. Operations are at greatest risk during this type of entry as units may be required to move directly into combat operations. For this reason, combat units and supporting structures must be sequenced into the contingency area in a manner that permits them to gain and sustain the initiative and protect the force. This is how General Scott planned his amphibious landing.[52]

The landing was set for 9 March 1847 at Collado Beach, about two and a half miles south of the city and the fortress. The site was selected after careful reconnaissance. At daylight sailors prepared the surfboats; and soldiers cleaned their arms, drew their ammunition and rations, filled their canteens, and formed on deck. Soon they boarded the surfboats that would take them ashore. After the naval covering force was in place, the surfboats were cut loose, and oarsmen propelled them towards shore. A death-like stillness fell over the vessels as the line of surfboats closed the 450 yards between them and the beach. The first wave of surfboats carried 2,595 troops.[53] As the boats grounded on the sand, troopers leaped into the water, carrying their muskets on their shoulders. The water reached their hips while wading ashore. As boats successfully arrived, the initial entry force formed on the beach while the surfboats returned back to the vessels for more men.[54] It was 1740 hours, and the American flag was planted on a sand hill. A dozen bands, still afloat on the vessels, struck up "The Star-Spangled Banner." The landing was accomplished without the loss of a single soldier.

Despite planning for a bloody battle on the beach, the landing was unopposed by the Mexican forces only two and a half miles away. The commander of the garrison at Vera Cruz decided to conserve

his forces that would be required to defend Vera Cruz and the fortress. This was a bad decision that would lead to the fall of both.[55]

Included in the entry operation was the capture of Vera Cruz and the fortress of San Juan de Ulua. Most military experts considered these fortifications to be the strongest in North America.[56] General Scott decided to take the city and fortress by siege rather than by direct assault. Mortars, artillery, and naval gunfire bombarded the area. The effect of the relentless bombardment was decisive, and Vera Cruz and San Juan de Ulua surrendered on 29 March 1847.[57]

This was also a successful joint operation between the navy and the army. The actual ship-to-shore movement was controlled by Navy Captain Forrest of the frigate "Raritan," the surfboats were operated by sailors, gunboats provided protection during the landing, and naval gunfire had a decisive impact on the success of the Vera Cruz bombardment. In addition, marines from the Home Squadron landed with General Scott's army on the beach of Collado.[58]

The success and magnitude of this historical entry operation is best highlighted by an article from the New Orleans newspaper, the Bulletin, dated 2 March 1847:

> The landing of the American army at Vera Cruz has been accomplished in a manner that reflects the highest credit on all concerned; and the regularity, precision, and promptness with which it was effected, has probably not been surpassed, if it has been equaled, in modern warfare. The removal of a large body of troops into boats in an open sea—their subsequent disembarkation on the sea-beach, on an enemy's coast, through a surf, with all their arms and accoutrements, without a single error or accident, requires great exertion, skill, and sound judgment. . . . Twelve thousand men were landed in one day, without, so far as we have heard, . . . the loss of a single life.[59]

With entry operations complete, General Scott had a secure lodgment area to commence a logistical build up of supplies and materiel. This support was needed before he further projected his force west to the ultimate objective, Mexico City.

OPERATIONS

In current doctrine, entry operations is followed by the operations stage. This stage is characterized by movement against the enemy and combat. This begins after sufficient, sustained combat power is assembled. Reconnaissance and force projection remain crucial elements as operations are planned and conducted. All operations must be conducted against a backdrop of effective logistics support. This is how General Scott conducted his operations in 1847.[60]

Vera Cruz provided the base needed to build up the necessary sustainment stockpiles to support Scott's movement west. However, time was a critical factor due to the threat of yellow fever in the upcoming spring and summer months. Preparations were made as fast as possible, but there were many logistical problems. Ample food and ammunition were on hand, but the significant problem was a

shortage of transportation to carry such sundry supplies as 300,000 bushels of oats, 200,000 bushels of corn, 200,000 muleshoes, 100,000 horseshoes, 100 pounds of blister ointment, 5,000 quills, 300 bottles of ink, and 1,000 pounds of office tape.[61] Scott's army was short of horses, mules, and wagons. They needed 7,500 horses and mules to draw the wagons and pack supplies, but only had 1,100. They had requested 800 wagons but only had 180 on hand. Fortunately, 300 more were at sea, en route. Some of the shortages were reduced by procuring animals from nearby villages.[62]

On 2 April 1847 the U.S. Army's movement inland began. The route westward was on the National Highway that would pass through Jaliapa, Perote, and Puebla. The main objective, Mexico City, was 250 miles due west. The Army was reorganized for the march into three divisions commanded by Generals Worth, Twiggs, and Patterson. General Twiggs took the lead and was followed by General Patterson's division one day later. Throughout the advance, each division slowly moved by stages into the interior. While on the move, each soldier carried 40 pounds of ammunition and his haversack, which held hard bread for four days and cooked bacon or pork for two days.[63]

Each division commander had a Mexican guide that acted as a source of intelligence as well as an interpreter.[64] In addition, the American force relied heavily on the information obtained from Army engineers that conducted continuous route reconnaissance. The Mexican Spy Company also provided useful information to help direct the movement. The company was made up of Mexicans who were paid $20 per month for their services.

General Scott's westward movement met heavy resistance along the way. However, every attempted defense by the Mexican army was defeated by the leadership, tactics, and bravery of the Americans. Military engagements were continuous. The Americans encountered 12,000 Mexicans at the Gorge of Cerro Gordo, near Jalapa, but outflanked them. No less than 4,000 Mexicans were killed or taken prisoner. Upon reaching Puebla, General Scott occupied it and paused. At that point, he had only 6,000 men, since 4,000 soldiers returned to the United States following the completion of their term of enlistment. However, by August he was reinforced, giving him 11,000 fit men. He also had 3,000 men that were sick. Leaving the sick soldiers at Puebla, the American force continued their march to Mexico City on 7 August 1847. They were then faced by 30,000 Mexicans, but through effective tactics and bold maneuvering, they won two battles on 20 August 1847. These two battles cost the Mexicans 10,000 soldiers who were killed in action. This was followed by a two-week armistice which broke down and was followed by yet two more American victories at Molino Del Rey on 8 September 1847 and at Chapultepec on 13 September 1847. Mexico City was then captured on 14 September 1847, following the withdrawal of the Mexican army the night before.[65] General Scott said, "The capital was not taken by any one or two corps, but by the talent, the science, the gallantry, the vigor of this entire army. In the glorious conquest, all had contributed . . ."[66]

The projection of this victorious force across the Gulf of Mexico and into the Mexican heartland was a result of many hardships and the loss of life. In the U.S. Army as a whole, sickness caused fully

seven times as many deaths as did Mexican gunfire.[67] The Army had no permanent hospital corps, and there were not enough doctors to care for the sick or wounded.[68] The rolls of the sick and wounded were extremely high. Those soldiers needing medical attention further required additional men to stay behind to care for them and protect them.[69] Since arriving in Vera Cruz, General Scott's grand total of losses exceeded 2,000.[70]

The operations stage of this campaign was a tremendous feat. It was accomplished with Joint teamwork between the services and a tailored force that was effectively led. This quote from General Scott summarizes the supporting functional components required to execute this operation:

> I beg to enumerate, once more, with due commendation and thanks, the distinguished staff officers, general and personal, who, in our last operations in front of the enemy accompanied me, and communicated orders to every point and through every danger . . . Acting Inspector General . . . Topographical Engineers . . . Chief Paymaster . . . Chief Quartermaster . . . Chief Commissary . . . Chief in the Adjutant General's Department . . . Engineer . . . Company of Sappers and Miners . . . Ordnance Officers . . . Surgeon General . . . and the medical staff.[71]

WAR TERMINATION AND POST-CONFLICT OPERATIONS

The next stage of force projection is war termination and post-conflict operations. This occurs when cessation of hostilities or a truce is called, and deployed forces transition to a period of post-conflict operations. This can happen even if regional combat operations are still underway in other parts of the theater of operations. This stage focuses on the restoration of order and reducing confusion following the operation. It could also include humanitarian assistance and functions that support the social needs of the population. During this stage, hostilities could resume, and forces must be ready to respond.[72]

Following the occupation of Mexico City, American forces conducted war termination and post-conflict operations. General Scott did not let his guard down. In General Order Number 286, he wrote:

> But all is not yet done. The enemy, though scattered and dismayed, has still many fragments of his late army hovering about us, and aided by an exasperated population, he may again reunite in treble our numbers, and fall upon us to advantage if we rest inactive on the security of past victories. Compactness, vigilance, and discipline are, therefore, our only securities. Let every good officer and man look to those cautions and enjoin them upon all others.[73]

Even as the American flag flew over the capital, Mexican forces were conducting a siege of the American-held Puebla. American reinforcements were sent from Vera Cruz and lifted the siege on 12 October 1847. This ceased organized Mexican resistance but gave way to occasional guerrilla raids.[74] Additional reinforcements continued to arrive through Vera Cruz to occupy the major cities, conduct minor expeditions against guerrilla bands, and to keep the supply lines open.

At the end of organized resistance, General Scott faced the task of governing the enemy capital and the captured territory with an occupation government which hopefully would win the most friends and create the fewest enemies. He established martial law and required his soldiers to respect private property and to conduct themselves as gentlemen. He also allowed Mexican civil courts to continue jurisdiction over all cases involving only Mexicans and kept the principal local officials in office.[75] Military safeguards were also used to protect civilian establishments from any outside threats.

Finally on 31 January 1848, American and Mexican diplomats reached agreement on a peace treaty. However, it still required ratification from both governments. In the meantime, American and Mexican military forces signed a Military Convention for the Provisional Suspension of Hostilities on 29 February 1848. At this time, for practical purposes, the war was over, and planning for the redeployment of the American army was well under way.[76]

The U.S. Senate ratified the treaty on 10 March 1848, and the formal exchange of ratifications of the Peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo took place on 30 May 1848. At that time Mexico asked the United States to maintain the American army in Mexico City until local authorities could take precautions to avoid disorder during the transfer of authority. The United States agreed, and, after these arrangements were soon completed, the American flag was replaced by the Mexican tricolor above the National Palace on 12 June 1848. The American force's war termination and post-conflict operations were successfully accomplished.[77]

REDEPLOYMENT AND RECONSTITUTION

The next stage of force projection is redeployment and reconstitution. The objective of this stage is to redeploy forces no longer needed back to their home station. Also, reconstitution activities can begin prior to redeployment to rebuild unit integrity and regenerate supplies and materiel. American soldiers in Mexico City entered this stage of operations on 27 May 1848.[78]

The Quartermaster had a thousand local women at work sewing new uniforms to replace war-torn ones. Many troops had received little, if any, clothing since entering Mexico. In addition, sustainment supplies continued to arrive in Vera Cruz to support the Army throughout the duration of redeployment.[79]

Even before the final lowering of the American flag in Mexico City, plans were underway to bring the American troops home. The first group of the main body left Mexico City on 27 May 1848, and within just over two weeks, all the soldiers had departed the capital. The overland redeployment route would take the soldiers eastward back along the 250 miles on the National Highway to the Gulf of Mexico, the same road they traveled en route to their objective. Vera Cruz was the port of embarkation. Once loaded at Vera Cruz, the vessels sailed for debarkation at either New Orleans, Louisiana, or Pass Christian, Mississippi. New hospitals were built at both ports to treat the sick and wounded. As the long columns of soldiers, wagons, and animals headed toward the coast, they temporarily halted at Jaliapa. Jaliapa was used as a staging area, because of its distance from the coastal lowlands where the yellow fever threat

was. There they remained until their ships were ready to sail. They were then called forward to Vera Cruz and rapidly marched into Vera Cruz and onto the awaiting ships.[80] General Worth's division was the last major force to leave Vera Cruz on 15 July 1848. All that remained were the garrison headquarters, a company of dragoons, and the Quartermaster's men supporting the movement of the remaining supplies. The dragoons and garrison sailed on 22 July 1848, and on 2 August 1848 most of the remaining Quartermaster's men and horses left for home. This concluded the redeployment and reconstitution operations—the Army was redeployed back to the United States.[81]

DEMOBILIZATION

The final stage of force projection is demobilization. This is the process that transitions units, individuals, and materiel from an active to a premobilization posture.[82]

Upon arrival back in the United States, regular Army troops moved on to their next duty assignments. On the other hand, volunteers were welcomed back to their communities as conquering heroes. There was usually a major celebration in whatever city was the point of return for a regiment. The celebration would normally include a brass band, a local militia company, speeches, and a grand picnic. [83] After the celebrations were over, the volunteers were demobilized from active service. In the case of the Mexico City campaign, the force projection cycle was complete.

CONCLUSION

The United States went to war and accomplished all of its objectives. It cost the loss of 13,780 men and the expenditure of $58 million in direct costs for military operations.[84] War causes pain, hardship, and life and death struggles. The United States soldiers, sailors, and marines that served in the Mexican War experienced all of these.

The war was fought in the west, in the northern territories, and in the heartland of Mexico. But the fight for Mexico City was the decisive campaign. To achieve success General Scott raised, organized, and trained an Army; deployed it by sea to a foreign land; landed the force in a hostile area by an amphibious assault; marched 250 miles overland; victoriously overcoming every enemy defense along the way; captured the capital of Mexico; served as an army of occupation; and redeployed the force back to the United States. This was America's first force projection operation. This was not easily accomplished. The significant factors of its success can be directly related to the stages of current force projection doctrine.

The relationship of the historical perspective of the Mexico City campaign and current doctrine highlights the existence of enduring fundamentals required to project military power to support the National Security Strategy of the United States. These enduring fundamentals are embedded in current force projection doctrine and are validated by General Scott's campaign 153 years ago. Specifically, the eight stages of force projection were as relevant then as they are now. In addition, history has shown that

the success of this process is dependent upon the lethality of the deploying force, anticipation, force tailoring, intelligence, battle command, training and logistics. Of all of the important elements that make up force projection—transportation is the most crucial. The ability for the United States to maintain adequate sealift and airlift is essential to a credible military force capable of global reach. General Scott experienced a shortage of ships, wagons, and mules. In today's world of multiple, potentially simultaneous threats, today's leaders cannot afford to experience what General Scott did—a shortage of transportation. This is a lesson that strategists and planners must fully integrate into the acquisition, budget, and force design processes. General John M. Shalikashvilli put it this way:, "If we do not build a transportation system that can meet our needs tomorrow, then it doesn't matter much what kind of force we have because we won't be able to get there."

Word Count = 8,334

ENDNOTES

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[6] U.S. Department of the Army, iv.

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[15] John S. Jenkins, History of the War Between the United States and Mexico from the Commencement of Hostilities to the Ratification of the Treaty of Peace (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, "n.d."), 197.

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[21] Adams, 36.

[22] Bauer, The Mexican War, 70.

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[30] Sue McWhiney, To Mexico with Taylor and Scott, 1845-1847 (Waltham: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1969), 76.

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[32] Winfield Scott, Memoirs of Lieut.-General Scott, LL.D (New York: Sheldon and Company Publishers, 1864), 397-398.

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[39] Adams, 66.

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[44] Karl J. Bauer, Surf Boats and Horse Marines (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1969), 66.

[45] Bauer, The Mexican War, 241.

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